

**FINAL REPORT  
OF THE  
INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION ISSUES**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency  
200 W. Washington Street, Suite 301  
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# INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ISSUES

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## **I. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DIRECTIVE**

The Legislative Council directed the Committee to do the following:

- (1) Study violence in schools.
- (2) Study issues related to the teaching of reading in elementary schools.

## **II. INTRODUCTION AND REASONS FOR STUDY**

A. The studying of violence in schools is based on two resolutions, HR 117-1999 and SR 35-1999.

B. The basis for studying issues related to the teaching of reading in elementary schools is SCR 43-1999, which was developed from SB 457-1999.

## **III. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM**

The Committee met 4 times and heard from numerous witnesses who are listed at the end of this Report.

At its first meeting on August 26, 1999, the Committee reviewed its study charge, was introduced to each topic by authors of the legislation calling for the study, and heard testimony on both school violence and reading.

At its second meeting on September 15, 1999, the Committee examined the issue of the teaching of reading.

At its third meeting on October 7, 1999, the Committee heard suggestions for legislation from interested parties, discussed these proposals, made several findings, and directed to staff to prepare drafts for the final meeting.

At its fourth and final meeting on October 28, 1999, the Committee made findings and recommendations to the Legislative Council (including recommendations for bill drafts) and adopted the Committee's Final Report.

## **IV. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY**

### **A. School Violence/ Safety:**

#### **1. Current Situation**

While statistics show that there is less total violence in schools, the violence is no longer focused in urban schools and is more random; thus, there is greater general concern about the issue.

Indiana was the first state to require school and school corporation crisis management plans to be in place. The school safety specialist legislation that passed in 1999 is a positive step toward promoting school safety. It is anticipated that training will begin in December 1999 at the school safety specialist training academy established in this 1999 law. DOE is currently conducting safety seminars around the state.

## 2. Psychological Screening of Troubled Students

It was suggested that the Committee might want to look at the screening of potentially violent students by school psychologists. However, finding qualified persons to do the testing, especially in rural areas, would be difficult as there are under 400 licensed school psychologists working today in Indiana schools. The proposal also omits the school from the evaluation process; once the school makes the referral, only the parents and the psychologist are involved. Improving the ratio of school counselors to students may be a better approach to aiding troubled students.

## 3. Attorney General's Testimony

Attorney General Modisett presented a brief overview of Project Peace, a peer mediation/conflict resolution program jointly sponsored by the Indiana State Bar Association, the Indiana Department of Education (DOE), and the Attorney General's office.

The Attorney General has prepared a manual called *Protecting Hoosier Children* for schools to use in deciding when student searches are appropriate.

Mr. Modisett recommends that the General Assembly consider amending the current student discipline statutes to require a school to notify law enforcement officials if a student brings a firearm to school and to require a psychological evaluation of a student who brings a firearm to school. This procedure would result in more open disclosure to the community of violations committed by students.

## 4. School Emergency Planning

DOE representatives testified that each school is required to have an emergency plan in place for the 2000-2001 school year. (Plans are already in place for naturally caused emergencies.) Each school must have its own plan. All plans must be coordinated with local law enforcement and be reviewed and cleared at the state level. DOE conducts workshops and gives guidance in plan preparation. County safety commissions help small schools and model plans are available for their use. The plans are both proactive and reactive. Training will focus on the identification of situations and prevention of problems. In short, the issue of school safety planning has already been addressed in this state. There are currently adequate resources and support for all schools for safety programs.

## 5. Department of Education

Cathy Danyluk, the Department of Education's school safety specialist, stated that while schools remain statistically the safest place in a community, steps must be taken to ensure their continued safety. She sees a balance of prevention, intervention, security, and crisis management as being crucial. DOE has been working with the Indiana State Police to train school staff in best practices for security. Ms. Danyluk outlined the keys to school security as being the following:

Policy: each school must have a policy concerning incident and crime reporting, discipline, and emergency preparedness and crisis intervention.

Staffing: schools must be aware of potential security issues when hiring and staffing positions, both paid and volunteer, and should train staff consistently. In addition, school corporations must make a decision whether to use on-staff security personnel or local law enforcement.

Students: schools must be aware of a variety of factors concerning students, including relationships and trust between students and faculty; gangs, cliques, and other associations; family and custody issues; and warning signs of trouble.

Legal: schools should consider security measures as being risk prevention measures as well as measures to limit liability. Inaction or ignorance concerning security may bring legal problems for a school.

Facilities: schools must consider physical design issues and access control, in addition to communications and signage issues.

Ms. Danyluk stated that there is a need to instill an attitude that everyone has a role in keeping schools safe, and to make training a top priority. She recommends incorporating school security into teacher preparation programs.

DOE made the following recommendations to improve student safety:

1. Enact legislation to require accredited schools to notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction of any school personnel holding a teacher license issued by the Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB) who is convicted of a crime specified in IC 20-6.1-3-7(b). (IC 20-6.1-3-7(a) requires the Superintendent to notify the IPSB to begin license revocation, but there is currently no mechanism to inform the Superintendent when to act.)
2. Provide schools with resources to acquire equipment to enhance school safety, such as access control, intruder detection, radio systems, telephone systems, hotlines, cameras, Internet security, etc. The current School Safety/ Safe Haven fund may need to be increased from current levels in future biennia to address this need.

## B. Teaching of Reading:

### 1. Background Testimony

The Committee's assignment to make a study of reading developed from the Chairperson Clark's phonics bill (SB 457-1999), which he ceased to advocate for enactment during the 1999 session after the bill was voted out of the Senate Education Committee. He had introduced that bill because of a concern that beginning teachers didn't seem to know how to teach reading, and were especially lacking skills in the teaching of phonemic and sound recognition. Senator Clark filed a Resolution for this study because he felt a broad discussion of the teaching of reading was necessary, including an examination of how reading is being taught in elementary schools and in higher education and how the proficiency standards established by the Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB) can be used to ensure that teachers know what is required of them before they are licensed.

### 2. Teacher Licensing - The Indiana Professional Standards Board (IPSB)

The IPSB presented testimony concerning teacher education and licensing and included an explanation of the licensing system to which the IPSB is moving. In the new licensing system, the guiding principles will be a focus on what an educator knows and is able to do, using teacher standards that are based on student standards, and increasing accountability.

The new licensing standards are in effect now for teacher preparation programs. The new licensure system will focus not on what a graduate has studied in college but rather on the potential teacher's ability to perform in a classroom. To ensure that teacher preparation programs are preparing students to meet the new standards, the IPSB will monitor the performance on licensing tests of students from each undergraduate program in Indiana. Under

the new licensure system, the IPSB does not mandate curriculum to colleges. The colleges will put a stamp of approval on their teacher "product", and the IPSB will care only about the person's assessments and competency, not credit hours. The system includes "sticks" to insure that higher education does a good job of training teachers. If a program does not prepare students to meet the standards, that program will lose its accreditation and students attending the program will be unable to receive federal financial aid. The IPSB believes that these sanctions will be powerful motivational tools for the improvement of teacher preparation programs.

The IPSB has looked at elementary standards and has "beefed up" the content area to make it tool specific, especially in phonics. Three themes were integrated into every standard at every grade and subject: technology, exceptional needs students, and diverse learners. Now the IPSB is adding another integrated theme, reading, to every standard for every grade and subject. (Safety is also being added as a fifth integrated theme.)

The IPSB made the following requests to the Committee:

1. Change the statute to implement the new licensure system (called "the induction program") one year earlier than current law requires.
2. Provide funding for induction program mentors. (Currently funding is provided for mentors in the internship program.)

### 3. Teacher Preparation - College and University Programs

Several individuals who appeared before the committee related that some teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach reading. Some schools have had to retrain their teachers at considerable expense to the school. There is strong support in research for teaching phonics directly and in an applied manner to unlock meaning. However, there has been debate about the best method to teach reading since the days of the McGuffey reader, and this debate will not go away. What is important is that all teachers, beginners and experienced teachers, must be provided with a full toolbox of strategies for the teaching of reading. Several persons stated a preference for a balanced approach to instruction and teacher preparation that includes a variety of skills and methodologies, including phonics.

At the university level, representatives of Ball State and Indiana University stated approval for a balanced method of teaching reading with a balance between decoding, comprehension, and other elements. The importance of regional and statewide collaborative activities was stressed to determine what programs seem to be most effective and to address the variety of concerns and approaches that exist throughout the state. Findings are that: (1) a variety of instructional programs are used throughout the state so that beginning teachers should have general preparation that can adapt to whatever instructional program is used in the school that employs the teacher; and (2) for continuing education of licensed teachers, instruction should be geared to whatever program is used in the school where the teacher teaches reading.

There is some work to be done at the university level in training teachers. There are some people who should not be teachers. The importance of the individual teacher as well as the teaching method was stressed. In addition, it is important that colleges educate future teachers to help the urban student and the disadvantaged student.

### 4. Professional Development

Many persons who testified noted that there is a serious need for professional development of teachers, especially in subjects like phonics, learning disabilities, and reading technology. Professional development is a key part of the full toolbox. Funding is needed for professional development and to teach the technological solutions that do exist. State assistance and money

for professional development was requested.

## 5. The Department of Education (DOE)

DOE staff stated that reading and literacy have been top legislative issues for DOE for the last several years. The annual December DOE conference in 1999 will focus on reading.

According to DOE, twenty to forty percent of children are at risk of having reading difficulties, yet "every child reading" is an attainable goal. To attain this goal, "start early, finish strong" (i.e., early intervention) is a key to teaching children to read. School-wide reading programs are important. Schools and families must value reading. High quality reading instruction is needed. Once again, teachers need ongoing professional development, and comprehension, reading, and writing must be taught together.

Reading performance assessments for Indiana show that Indiana students do well by grade 3 with 69% reaching mastery. However, decline occurs as skills shift from learning to read to reading to learn. There are slight declines in comprehension skills in grades 6 and 8, and more of a drop by grade 10 when sophisticated reading with higher levels of comprehension is required. We need to know what reading and literacy comprehension really are. There is more to reading than decoding and letter recognition. Comprehension is the major problem in the US; we do well with decoding, but our kids do not think well when they read. Much interstate comparative data for Indiana is dated (1994 results) because participation in the national reading assessment (NAEP) tests has been optional for school corporations and most have chosen not to participate, but recent legislation allows DOE to require schools to participate in this national reading testing program.

Indiana currently has several state initiatives through DOE to help children learn to read. These initiatives include the following:

1. The Remediation and Preventive Remediation Grant Program provides direct remediation and preventive remediation for Grades K-12 in reading, language arts, and mathematics. All students who fail ISTEP+ must be remediated. Funding for the Reading Recovery Program is included in this initiative.
2. 1 Step Up - Educate Indiana focuses on students who perform below state standards on ISTEP+.
3. Library Materials Grant provides significant funding for school library materials purchases.
4. Early Intervention Grants include a variety of grants such as Success for All, Four Blocks, Literacy Groups, Literacy Collaborative, Full Day Kindergarten, Even Start, First Steps, Early Success, and locally developed programs.
5. Title 1 Program involves federal funds to states and schools to ensure equitable and quality education for all children, supplemental funding to improve teaching and learning in high poverty schools, and targeted resources to support children in academic need who are not meeting state performance standards in math and language arts.

DOE made the following recommendations to the Committee:

1. Create a task force of experts on reading to give advice at the state level on methods of teaching and assessment.
2. Have the task force develop a "phonics tool kit" for elementary teachers.
3. Create a reading specialist or reading program director in DOE to work with the task force and schools of education.
4. Establish an "Indiana Reads" day to promote the value of reading.
5. Provide ongoing support for DOE's reading and literacy initiative, including early intervention programs, library book purchases, and adult literacy programs.

## 6. Early Intervention & Grade One Assessment

The importance of early intervention was frequently stressed.

The Committee was informed that the Governor's Office has initiated a reading assessment program this year for Indiana students that has the following characteristics:

- (1) Assessment occurs in grade 1. Assessment must come early in the child's school experience. Grade 3 is too late to discover reading problems.
- (2) Each child is assessed four times in grade 1. Four assessments are necessary because of the significant amount of change in a child's reading progress that occurs during that first year.
- (3) The assessment includes phonics, beginning reading skills, comprehension, and the application of phonics and beginning reading skills.
- (4) The assessment is not an instructional program, but rather gives teachers data about where each child stands in reading skills. Teachers badly need this information. This test data will provide a basis for a variety of programs.
- (5) Participation in the program by school corporations is voluntary.
- (6) School year 1999-2000 is being spent in development and preparation for the first year of actual testing which will occur in the 2000-2001 school year. There will be opportunity for public input in the development of the assessment.

There is potential to do an assessment in kindergarten and also in grade 2. The test is very inexpensive. If the test is given in kindergarten, there will be a need for special training for some kindergarten teachers so that they can see reading deficiencies.

## 7. Special Education - Learning Disabilities

Parents and others told the Committee that are reading programs for students with significant learning disabilities, but these programs are not provided by the school systems and there is unmet need in the community. Lack of literacy for a child is a significant personal, social, and academic problem.

Private programs were described to the Committee, and several parents related personal experiences with their children and the expense incurred in securing intensive private instruction. It was stated that all Indiana children who need specialized instruction should have the opportunity to achieve literacy, not just those children whose parents can find and fund this kind of instruction.

Several successful programs that have been used in public schools were also described.

It was stated that the new federal special education law (IDEA 97) moves special education (SE) students toward general education (GE) and requires the same assessment of SE students as GE students receive. The reality is that an estimated 69% of SE students are of average or above average intelligence. Over 50% of the SE students in Indiana have learning disabilities (LD).

According to testimony, a new era in SE is beginning. Phonics are necessary, but the problem is bigger than phonics and includes auditory processing. Teacher training institutions must train for all areas and train teachers to know that children learn differently. Attention must be paid to preschool ages to catch problems early. The goal of public education is to teach all children. Children should not be taught in separate learning centers outside public education.

## 8. Other Recommendations

It was recommended during the course of testimony that



- (1) Reading should be included on the "report card" that schools make to the public.
- (2) The time spent on reading in schools has been decreased. This time must be protected, especially in the middle schools.
- (3) Concerning school libraries, the amounts spent per student for school libraries are too low. Performance based accreditation (PBA) should look at the collections and circulations of school libraries. School libraries should all be computerized.
- (4) The state level program and position of "Reading Supervisor" has been abolished. This had been a major, federally funded program, and these people and resources are needed today.

It was suggested that schools might develop a test to screen teacher applicants for knowledge of methods for teaching reading before the school hires a new teacher.

## **V. COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee made the following findings of fact:

### **A. School violence:**

1. The Committee finds that Indiana is currently implementing several programs that focus on school safety concerns, and that at this time substantial program change is not warranted.
2. The Committee finds that there is a need to require school authorities to notify a law enforcement agency when a student is involved with a firearm on school property. (The requirement of current law that a prosecutor be notified after the student is expelled is not sufficiently timely and does not give sufficient or timely notice to the community.)
3. The Committee finds that there is a need to alert the Superintendent of Public Instruction in a more timely and systematic fashion when a teacher is convicted of a crime for which statute provides that a teachers license is revoked.
4. The Committee does not at this time support requiring local schools to identify and have potentially dangerous students screened by school psychologists.

### **B. Teaching of Reading:**

1. The Committee finds that teachers should have a "full toolbox" of methodologies to teach reading. Colleges should train prospective teachers in all known methods for teaching reading.
2. The Committee finds that approaches to the teaching of reading should encompass a kindergarten through college graduation (K-16) focus.
3. The Committee finds that there is a need for parties having an interest in the teaching of reading to better communicate and better work together to achieve goals. There is a need for a collaborative reading task force that includes representatives from the various interested groups.
4. The Committee does not at this time support the mandating of a college or elementary/secondary school curriculum for reading or the teaching of reading.
5. The Committee finds that the Indiana Professional Standards Board should continue to develop a teacher licensing program that requires persons who wish to be teachers of reading to have a "full toolbox" of knowledge of methods to teach reading.

6. The Committee finds that the Indiana Professional Standards Board should communicate on a regular basis to members of the General Assembly having significant involvement in the education policy making area concerning all policies, strategies, and work of the Board, but especially on those matters related to teacher preparation for the teaching of reading.

The Committee made the following recommendations concerning preliminary drafts (PDs) of proposed legislation:

1. **PD 3480:** Requires a school superintendent to immediately notify law enforcement authorities when a student brings a firearm on school property or is in possession of a firearm on school property. Provides that the superintendent may give similar notice if a deadly weapon other than a firearm is involved. Requires a law enforcement agency that receives notice from a superintendent to investigate and take appropriate action. Removes a requirement that the superintendent notify the county prosecutor in similar situations. This PD was approved by a vote of 8-0.

2. **PD 3481:** Requires the superintendent of a school corporation or equivalent authority of an accredited nonpublic school to notify the superintendent of public instruction when the administrator knows that a current or former employee with a teachers' license has been convicted of an offense for which a teacher loses a license. This PD was approved by a vote of 10-1.

## WITNESS LIST

Representative Susan Crosby  
Senator Steve Johnson  
Attorney General Jeff Modisett  
Steve Davis, Director of Student Services, Indiana Department of Education (DOE)  
Terry Spradlin, Legislative Liaison, DOE  
Cathy Danyluk, School Safety Specialist, DOE  
Clarissa Snap, Coordinator of School Safety Specialist Training Academy  
Tom Hansen, Director of Legal and External Affairs, Professional Standards Board  
Gail Pluta, Indiana Federation of Teachers  
Sharon Barnett, Washington Township, Marion County, School Board Member  
Larry Smith, Chairperson, Elementary Education Department, Ball State University  
Amy Cook Lurvey, COVOH  
Dean Don Warren, Indiana University School of Education  
Chuck Little, Urban Schools Association  
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Dr. Mary Andis, Language Arts Consultant, DOE  
Dorothy Winchester, Associate Director, Program Development, DOE  
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